

Testimony of
Kenneth Adams
Chief of the Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe

Hearing on
S.2694, the Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia
Federal Recognition Act of 2002

Wednesday, October 9, 2002
10:00 a.m.

Good morning, Mr. Chairman. I am Kenneth Adams, Chief of the Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe. With me today are Chief Adkins, Chief Bradby, Chief Branham, Chief Bass, and Chief Richardson. We are the proud descendants of the Keepers of this Great Land when the English Colonists arrived in 1607. The Peace Treaty of 1677 established the Governing authority of the Pamunkey Queen and the Monacan Chief over our ancestors. We are the direct descendants of those colonial tribes. Today these nations have come together to ask the Congress of these United States to acknowledge our one on one relationship with the government of this nation.

Chief Justice John Marshall in 1832 stated, "The Constitution, by declaring those treaties already made, as well as those to be made, the Supreme Law of the land, has adopted and sanctioned the previous treaties made with the Indian Nations."

Each of these great Chiefs carry in their hearts many burdens of our people. I cannot express for them the sorrows they have endured. But I can express to you a sample of what we have all endured. When I was a child growing up in King William County, Virginia, high school education for Indians in the state was almost nil. Even before I entered grade school, my older brothers and sisters were being sent off to Oklahoma and Michigan to complete high school. I was the first Indian to graduate from King William High School in 1965. Myself in 1967 and my brother in 1968 served in Vietnam. Shortly afterwards, I went to visit my brother. It was almost like walking in the house of a stranger. Not because of our experiences in Viet Nam. It was because of the policies of the State of Virginia. It was the policy that forced him from home in order to seek a high school education. And what was his response to that policy? His response was to put his life on the line for the United States of America. I can surely tell you today, in these individual tribes, there are many more stories like this on. I can say with 100 per-cent certainty, when it comes to defending this homeland, Virginia Indians have spilt their blood. You might ask us, why do you come now? We have an answer. For almost 400 years, Virginia attempted to diminish our presence. After 1700 we were pushed onto increasingly smaller pieces of land and by the mid 1900s Virginia was attempting to document us out of existence. The fight to maintain our identity was a struggle our Mothers and Fathers fought well, but they lacked education and resources. They had been told on several occasions no help from the Federal Government was available. In 1946 one of Chiefs attempted to obtain

high school educational resources through the Office of Indian Affairs. The only help offered was in the form of education at a federal boarding school. No help was available in Virginia. If the state government was attempting to deny our existence and the federal government provided little assistance, where could these people possibly go? That is why it has taken us so long to get here.

Virginia has recognized its errors. Along with Bill HR 2345 sponsored by Congresspersons Moran and Davis, Senator Allen, with the support of Senator Warner, has introduced Senate Bill 2964 granting Federal Acknowledgment to these six tribes. In 1999, the Virginia General Assembly passed a Resolution with over whelming support asking for Congressional Recognition of these tribes. King William County, Virginia, home of the Upper Mattaponi, also passed a resolution in favor of Federal Acknowledgment. We have the support of the majority of the Virginia Congressmen and Women. As you can see, we have overwhelming support from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Now, the United States Congress has the opportunity to make a historical change. A positive change that would bring honor to you as well as honor to us.

We ask you to make the right decision and support this bill for Federal Acknowledgment of Virginia Indians.